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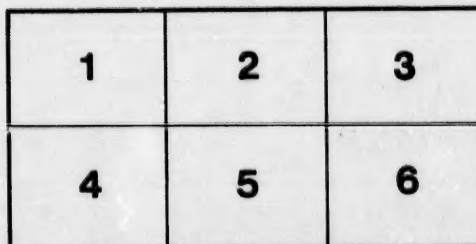
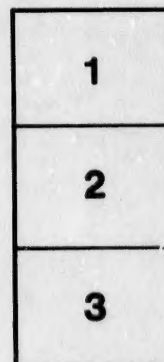
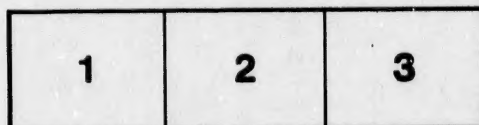
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House of Commons Debates

FOURTH SESSION—SIXTH PARLIAMENT.

SPEECH OF HON. EDWARD BLAKE, M.P.,

ON THE

ADJOURNMENT & TARIFF DEBATE.

TUESDAY, 1st APRIL, 1890.

MR. BLAKE. After the statement of the hon. member for South Oxford (Sir Richard Cartwright), that he does not think the principal debate can close until Thursday, I think the question is settled. I agree with the First Minister that the present debate should be disposed of before the adjournment, and as the hon. member for South Oxford (Sir Richard Cartwright) is of opinion, from what he has learned, that the debate cannot be closed on Wednesday, I do not see how an adjournment can take place until Thursday. Even if it were possible, I would, as a private member, very strongly object to the course which the First Minister suggests, namely, that we should so expedite matters as to pass the whole tariff of this country through all the preliminary stages, introduce the Bill, pass it, give the second reading and get it into committee. These various stages are for a purpose; they are for the purpose of avoiding too rapid action, for the purpose of giving time for consideration, and for the purpose of giving an opportunity for representations being made from various persons all over this broad country with reference to the proposed changes, in order that no mistakes may be made. What the hon. gentleman proposes is that we shall proceed, first of all, and forthwith, to almost the last stage. Now, Sir, the regulations of the House give us a Committee of the Whole upon these resolutions, which, for the moment, we waive in order to afford the hon. gentleman the convenience of putting them in force, provisionally, at the Customs houses at once. That opportunity we should have at this stage, of a full and free discussion, and on the concurrence and on the stages of the Bill we shall have opportunities for presenting our views formally by motion. It is likely, and I hope it will be the case, that there will be upon the Bill itself very little discussion, but there may be discussion, and the opportunity should be afforded for it. Certain considerations

may be brought to our attention before the later stage, and in the interval, which may make it very important that we should bring them forward. It is to be remembered that even the Government itself, when it frames these tariff changes, acts under very considerable difficulty. It is utterly impossible for the Government to obtain at first that thorough and full advice on these subjects which it is important that it should obtain. It cannot indicate its intentions on these matters beforehand, without the grossest frauds being perpetrated at the Customs houses, or without its intentions being made use of for private purposes. Therefore, those who are framing the tariff require a certain interval after their proposition is elaborated, just as much as the House and the country does, to consider the various bearings of this proposition. I feel now, as I have always felt that it would be a monstrous thing to impute serious incapacity or neglect to a Finance Minister, who, bringing down propositions for a change under these difficulties, should say frankly at a subsequent date different views were presented to me after I brought down those resolutions which do modify my opinion upon them. My view is, that the difficulties of the case necessarily require that that degree of elasticity should be readily accorded, without comment or observation, to the Finance Minister, so that he, like the rest of us, may have an opportunity, in a country which stretches 3,000 miles across, to get at public opinion upon this subject. Therefore, without the slightest desire to protract the Session, I must protest against what, I think, are the evil and dangerous consequences of hurrying through all the preliminary stages, and at a very early date getting towards the final stages, in a matter which it really does require time and consideration and general information to properly mature.